Fasting and Performing the Taraaweeh salaah Without Valid Evidence

Question: A Ghayr Muqallid who performs salaah with us has started a furore here. When the sky was overcast on the 29th of Sha'baan, he made an announcement stating that whether the moon is sighted or not, the Taraaweeh salaah will be performed and the fasting will commence. He says that if the moon is sighted, the fast and Taraaweeh salaah will be in order, otherwise, they will be regarded as Nafl. To prove his point, he says that if a person who had already performed the Fardh salaah joins a Jamaa'ah, his Fardh with them will be regarded as Nafl. Therefore, he reasons, if a Fardh can become a Nafl, why can the Sunnah Taraaweeh salaah not be regarded as Nafl?

Many people have supported him and when we showed them the ruling in *Fataawaa Raheemiyyah* and *Behisti Zewar*, they refuse to listen, saying that they will accept nothing less than the *Sihaah Sitta*.

Can the Taraaweeh salaah and fasting be started with substantive proof? Is it proper to say that these acts of Ibaadah will revert to the status of Nafl if the moon is not sighted?

Answer: This person lacks knowledge and understanding. A Hadith of Bukhaari states: "Do not start fasting until you see the moon and do not stop fasting until you see the moon. If the sky is overcast, then calculate (the month as thirty days)."[1] The opinion of this person should therefore be rejected because it clearly opposes the Ahadeeth.

In another Hadith of Bukhaari, Rasulullaah ρ said, "None of you should ever fast a day or two before Ramadhaan unless he be a person who usually fasts on that day."[2]

Fasting the day before Ramadhaan is therefore prohibited in this Hadith. This day is referred to as the day of doubt and it is Makrooh to fast on this day with the intention of fasting for Ramadhaan.[3] Because of the doubtful intention, it will also be Makrooh to fast on this day thinking that it will become a Nafl fast if the moon is not sighted. Fasting with the express intention of Nafl is allowed, but only for people with knowledge and not for the common man. Such a fast would become a Fardh fast if the moon is indeed sighted. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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[1] Bukhaari (Vol.1 Pg.256).
[2] Bukhaari (Vol.1 Pg.256).
[3] Hidaayah (Vol.1 Pg.193).